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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 TOKYO 002033

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [MNUC](#) [ECON](#) [ETRD](#) [CASC](#) [KN](#) [JA](#)  
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S AUG 28 MEETING WITH VFM YABUNAKA PART  
2: POTUS VISIT, NORTH KOREA, CHILD ABDUCTION

REF: TOKYO 1987

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Classified By: Ambassador John V. Roos; reasons 1.4 (b/d)

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SUMMARY  
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1. (S) The Ambassador underscored the Obama Administration's strong, consistent position on the U.S. commitment to the U.S.-Japan Alliance and on its resolute stance against North Korea's belligerent actions in an August 28 meeting with Vice Foreign Minister Mitoji Yabunaka. Yabunaka noted that the current U.S. approach to North Korea is optimal from the Japanese government's perspective, and that maintaining strong public support for the Alliance requires the U.S. and Japanese governments to keep a watchful eye over: 1) any perceived lack of coordination between the United States and Japan on "deals" with North Korea; and 2) incidents and accidents by U.S. military personnel in Japan. He said he favors replacing the incremental approach taken in the Six-Party process with a bolder approach to resolving the DPRK nuclear issue, although its success would hinge on the level to which Kim Jong-il maintains his power. On the President's upcoming visit to Japan in November, he recommended keeping the program relatively simple and centered around the Tokyo metropolitan area, adding that it would be premature to include a visit to Hiroshima. Responding to the Ambassador's call for Japan's accession to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, Yabunaka suggested that a multi-government working group be formed to review all pertinent issues. He noted difficulty, however, in persuading the Ministry of Justice and Japanese politicians on the need to introduce a policy that is inconsistent with "traditional Japanese family

norms." End Summary.

12. (C) On August 28, the Ambassador met with Vice Foreign Minister Mitoji Yabunaka to discuss a range of bilateral issues. The DCM also participated. VFM Yabunaka was accompanied by Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) Director General for North American Affairs Kazuyoshi Umemoto. (Note: Please see reftel for part 1 of this message, which summarizes VFM Yabunaka's views on the foreign policy implications of the change in the Japanese government following the Democratic Party of Japan's victory in the August 30 Lower House elections. End Note.)

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WARNING: U.S. SERVICEMEN, UNCOORDINATED "DEALS" WITH DPRK  
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13. (S) VFM Yabunaka praised as "perfect" the Obama Administration's approach to North Korea, particularly its consistent public messages and firm stance on enforcing UN Security Council Resolutions 1718 and 1874. He stressed, given the current political climate in Japan, that two issues are critical for maintaining the high level of public support for the U.S.-Japan alliance. First, any serious incident or accident involving U.S. military personnel in Japan requires proactive mitigation by both governments. The Ambassador's visible expressions of deep sympathy for anyone who might incur damages from such incidents could help minimize any negative public sentiment. Second, Yabunaka continued, the U.S. Government ought to maintain vigilance against any actions that can be viewed by the Japanese public as compromises to North Korea at the expense of Japan's national interests. The Japanese public felt "betrayed" by the Bush

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Administration's decision to delist the DPRK from the list of state sponsors of terrorism, seemingly without prior coordination with the Japanese government. Close coordination with allies is, therefore, essential to preventing such public misconception, Yabunaka said.

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DPRK POLICIES IN SYNC, "GRAND DEAL" MAY BE NEEDED  
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14. (S) The Ambassador pointed out that the Obama Administration has been conveying a clear commitment to the Alliance, the cornerstone of U.S. security policy in the region. As such, the U.S. Government intends to consult closely with Japan on any significant issue relevant to the DPRK problem, including the abduction of Japanese citizens by North Korea. Noting that Secretary Clinton and other senior U.S. officials understand the importance of the abduction issue to Japan and the Japanese people, the Ambassador stated that he believes the two governments are completely in sync on North Korea policy. Yabunaka concurred, adding that he believes it is unrealistic to proscribe all bilateral dialogue between the United States and the DPRK. From his perspective, U.S. bilateral talks with the DPRK are critical to resolving the North Korean nuclear issue. They must, however, take place within the framework of the Six-Party Talks, with close and thorough coordination with allies beforehand. Moreover, the parties must not forget that the ultimate objective of the Six-Party process is the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, Yabunaka added. He also shared his personal views on the overall approach to North Korea, asserting that the current step-by-step, action-for-action approach ought to be replaced by a more holistic deal, such as dismantling all plutonium-based programs at the outset in exchange for normalization of relations. The success of such approach depends, however, on the DPRK's domestic political situation, including the degree to which Kim Jong-il can maintain his power, Yabunaka asserted.

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15. (C) VFM Yabunaka pointed out that the Japanese public will have high expectations toward President Obama's visit to Japan in November, as the President enjoys an historic level of popularity among the Japanese people. Anti-nuclear groups, in particular, will speculate whether the President would visit Hiroshima in light of his April 5 Prague speech on non-proliferation. He underscored, however, that both governments must temper the public's expectations on such issues, as the idea of President Obama visiting Hiroshima to apologize for the atomic bombing during World War II is a "non-starter." While a simple visit to Hiroshima without fanfare is sufficiently symbolic to convey the right message, it is premature to include such program in the November visit. Yabunaka recommended that the visit in November center mostly in Tokyo, with calls on the Emperor and Prime Minister, as well as some form of public program, such as speeches, an engagement at a university, or a town hall-like meeting with local residents. Highlighting the busy political calendar in the coming weeks, including the election of the new Prime Minister, launching of the new Cabinet, and the Prime Minister's participation in the UN General Assembly and the Pittsburgh G-20 Summit, Yabunaka noted that both sides should begin working quickly on the President's November visit. The Ambassador conveyed an

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informal invitation for the new Prime Minister to attend the Pittsburgh Summit, adding that an official invitation will follow once the Prime Minister is elected.

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WORKING GROUP ON HAGUE CONVENTION  
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16. (C) The Ambassador urged progress on Japan's accession to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, underscoring that the issue is paramount to the U.S. Government. VFM Yabunaka acknowledged the importance of the issue, noting that other governments, including France, have also approached the Japanese government to press for accession to the Hague Convention. He said he was surprised when the Canadian Prime Minister had raised the issue during Prime Minister Aso's visit to Canada.

MOFA is discussing the issue with the Ministry of Justice (MOJ), which has the lead. He proposed the idea of establishing a working group or committee to review all issues relevant to acceding to the Hague Convention, including not just the U.S. Embassy, but also the embassies of a number of interested countries. At this point, however, the only public message that the Japanese government is prepared to offer is that Japan is "prepared to consider the issues." MOJ officials, as well as many within MOFA, resist Japan's accession in light of traditional family norms in Japanese society, he explained. Visitation rights following a divorce, Yabunaka noted, are an unfamiliar concept to most Japanese. He added that MOFA will discuss the issue with the new Prime Minister, and urged the U.S. Government to continue to engage MOJ and Japanese politicians to raise their level of awareness.

ROOS